

# IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

JUNE 2012



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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## A Message from the: **State Conservationist**



*Richard Sims,  
State Conservationist*

**Editor's Note:** Iowa NRCS State Conservationist Richard Sims was recently named Regional Conservationist for the Northeast Region. Sims will begin his new duties in July. His office will be located in Washington D.C.

### A Final Goodbye

This will be my last Current Development article as Iowa's State Conservationist. I am proud of what we have accomplished over the past four years. I want to focus my attention on you, though, because you made it happen. Because of you:

- » We have new conservation partners working in our offices, and we've expanded our thriving partnerships.
- » Conservation practices were installed and Iowa has exceeded prior year's program financial assistance by several millions of dollars.
- » Watershed projects waiting to be installed were implemented, and we provided flood prevention to city and county infrastructure.
- » We have dramatically reduced the backlog in Wetlands Reserve Program restoration work, and we have increased efficiencies by 100 percent.

There is no other state with the agriculture intensity like Iowa and it was an adrenaline rush every working day. I want to thank all of you for supporting my management and leadership decisions during the past four years.

Jeanie and I are very excited about moving to our next adventure and I look forward to becoming a member of the national leadership team. We already have an apartment, and I am within a 25-minute metro ride to the office (no driving), and we have downsized our household belongings. I anticipate 50 percent of my time will be on the road learning about the partners, NRCS staff and resource concerns of the Northeast.

I close with this – remember that we are only as good as the service we provide to others. You need to stay technically sharp, safeguard the taxpayers' funds and maintain our conservation ethic. I wish you all the best of luck! It has been an honor to be your State Conservationist.



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### **Current Developments Stories and Photos**

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Greiner at [laura.greiner@ia.usda.gov](mailto:laura.greiner@ia.usda.gov).

Past issues can be found at [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/currentdevelopments.html](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/currentdevelopments.html).



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## Another WIN: Western IA No-Till Field Day Huge Success



*Sarah Carlson (right), research and policy director for Practical Farmers of Iowa, presented information about cover crops at the 5th annual WIN Field Day.*

More than 200 farmers, landowners and producers attended the 5th annual Western Iowa No-till (WIN) Demonstration Field Day on June 12 at the Carstens 1880 Farmstead south of Shelby. Attendees learned about soil stewardship on the highly erodible lands of western Iowa.

The 2012 field day began with breakout sessions on cover crop management and planter adjustments for fields with heavy residue. Speaker presentations included a corn/soybean market update, weather outlook and discussion of aerial application of cover crops.

Keynote speaker, Paul Jasa, extension engineer at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, spoke on the strategies for successful long-term no-till and the benefits gained from no-till practices.

Local agribusinesses were also available throughout the day to visit with participants and demonstrate equipment and services.

The field day was sponsored by NRCS, ISU Extension and the soil and water conservation districts in Harrison, Pottawattamie, Cass and Shelby Counties, along with many local supporting agribusinesses.

## New Atlantic AFO: Jamie Carpenter

State Conservationist Richard Sims announced in late May the addition of Jamie Car-



penter to the Iowa NRCS Leadership Team. Carpenter will serve as Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Atlantic beginning July 15.

Carpenter is currently a district conservationist for Alabama NRCS in the Athens field office. Before that, he was a district conservationist in Tusculum, Ala. He began his NRCS career in 2002.

Carpenter is a participant in the Emerging Leadership Development Program. He served a three-month detail as Acting Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Specialist on the Financial Assistance Programs Division staff at National Headquarters.

An Auburn University graduate, Carpenter and his wife, Alisha, have four children: Grace, Sara, Colin, and Luke.

"I am very excited to have the opportunity to be a part of the Iowa NRCS Team and I cannot wait to get out in the field and see all the great conservation that is being put on the ground," says Carpenter.



## Summer Interns: Just Getting Started



Iowa NRCS Summer Interns met as a group in Winterset in early June to visit with State Office staff and begin a three-day tour and training in southwest Iowa. Pictured from Left to Right with duty location: (Front) Bryce Gonzales (Waukon), Kelly Mercier (Ankeny), Heidi Dittmer (Ida Grove), Madison Linkenmeyer (Des Moines), Ava Haun (Jefferson), Andrew Koehlmoos (Leon), Merle Ann Jaster (DeWitt). (Back) State Conservationist Rich Sims, Gabriele Frerichs (Wapello), Jaime Sandoval (Hampton), Amanda McNees (Corydon), Emily Creech (Malvern), Aris Harris (Atlantic), and Corey Harris (Marshalltown).

### **NOPBNRCSE: Seeking Members**

The National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees is seeking new members, says Jaia Fischer, soil conservationist in Newton and Black Emphasis Program Manager for Iowa NRCS.

The group seeks to enhance the awareness and improve the level of education and professional development of Black employees within NRCS. They also have a goal of increasing Black participation in agriculture, natural resources, and related fields. The organization is open to ALL NRCS employees.

To learn more, contact Jaia Fischer at 641-792-4116 or visit [www.TheNOPBNRCSE.org](http://www.TheNOPBNRCSE.org).

### **Iowa Children's Water Festival: Bug ID Indicates Water Quality**

Biologist Jennifer Anderson-Cruz and Public Affairs Specialist Jason Johnson presented to five elementary classes totaling 113 students from across Iowa at the Iowa Children's Water Festival on May 10 in Ankeny, on the topic of water quality.



Johnson said this was the third year the two presented the topic. "Jennifer does a nice job of explaining to the kids that you can use aquatic macroinvertebrates as indicators of stream health," he said.

Students went through stations and filled out a worksheet to identify "bug" specimens as indicators of water quality.



## 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Serves As: Teaching Opportunity at Big Creek

The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Big Creek Lake near Polk City served as an opportunity to teach visitors about a few of the environmental issues and natural resource concerns in the watershed.

The June 2 celebration included events focused on fishing, wildlife, and prairies. It also included a boat tour and a fishing clinic.

Big Creek Watershed Coordinator Zach DeYoung with IDALS-Division of Soil Conservation said he used the anniversary to kick off a long-term watershed project. He says the lake has high bacteria levels, algae blooms and high sedimentation. Big Creek attracts an average of 740,000 visitors per year.

"The stations were educational," said DeYoung. "For example, the DNR fisheries biologist talked about fish survival in poor water conditions and the DNR wildlife representative discussed grassland and prairie management in the watershed."

For more information about the Big Creek Lake Watershed, contact DeYoung at 515-964-1883, x 3, or visit [www.bigcreeklake.org](http://www.bigcreeklake.org).



The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Big Creek Lake included a boat tour (top) and conservation education, such as a rainfall simulator (bottom).

## Soap Creek: Tour Highlights Flood Control Structures in SE Iowa

Nearly 100 people gathered in Blakesburg on June 14 to load buses to tour 21 of 132 flood control structures built in the Soap Creek Watershed since 1990.

Lee White, state construction engineer with Iowa NRCS, says Soap Creek has been an extremely successful project. "The landowners are seeing the benefits with the heavy rains we've had over the last several years," he said. "The dams are holding the water back and releasing it slowly."

White says the tour was a celebration of local, state and federal agencies and organizations coming together to achieve a common goal.

At the event, Congressman Dave Loebsack touted the project as a model for the country. "It's governmental and non-governmental institutions cooperating," he said.



Soap Creek flood control structure

The 132 structures cross four counties – Wapello, Davis, Appanoose and Monroe.

## Nabbing Nitrates: 4 New Videos Available Online

Story Provided by Lynn Betts

Four new videos are available online through the Missouri and Mississippi Divide Resource Conservation and Development (M&M RC&D) that show how bioreactors, conservation drainage, wetlands and riparian buffers take nitrates out of underground tile waters.

The videos were produced through a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) from NRCS, with additional funding from several Iowa organizations and agencies.

Jim Frederick, Vice-Chairman of the M&M RC&D in Glidden, says these video are effective because they show how these practices work underground, where we are unable to see how they really work.

"Since these are fairly new water quality practices and you can't watch them work in person, we produced short videos with animation of what's happening underground to introduce the practices to farmers, conservationists, and anyone else interested in improving the quality of water leaving farmlands," said Frederick.

To view these short videos, visit [www.mmdividercd.org](http://www.mmdividercd.org) and click on "Projects."

## USDA Employees: Time to Eat Right

USDA's Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services are sponsoring a year-long campaign entitled, "Nutrition Transformation Campaign: My Food. My Plate. My Transformation." to encourage all employees to set monthly goals and join others who want to make dietary changes that can last a lifetime.

Beginning this month through June 2013 USDA employees will receive a "how-to" nutrition message with tips you can use to transform your diet. Additionally, you will be challenged to use one or more of the tips to build a better plate.

Employees are encouraged to use the SuperTracker at [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov), which is the site to get the latest nutrition information and to use e-tools that can help you transform your diet.

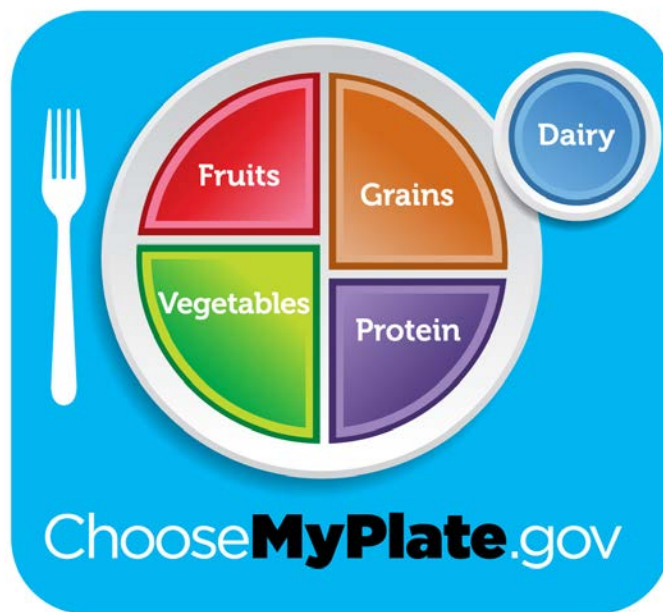
You can join colleagues at USDA Connect (<https://connections.usda.gov>) to share your successes.

### June Tip:

#### Add Some Color To Your Plate

Some Tips on Making Your Plate Colorful:

- » *Get creative with your salad.*  
Toss in shredded carrots, strawberries, spinach, watercress, orange segments, or sweet peas for a flavorful, fun



salad.

- » *Be ahead of the game.* Cut up a batch of bell peppers, carrots, or broccoli. Prepackage them to use when time is limited. You can enjoy them on a salad, with hummus, or in a veggie wrap.
- » *Add fruits and veggies to your sandwiches.* Whether it is a sandwich or a wrap, vegetables make great additions to both. Try sliced tomatoes, romaine lettuce, or avocado on your everyday sandwich or wrap for extra flavor.
- » *Don't forget the fiber.* Make most of your choices whole or cut-up fruit, rather than juice, for the benefits that dietary fiber provides.

### The Challenge for the Month

Make half your lunch or dinner plate fruits and vegetables, and color it with one or more new fruits or vegetables at least one day of each week.



## Conservation Educators: Whipples Vision Becomes Reality



*Harold Whipple plays a conservation-themed card game with students during one of his presentations.*

Conservation education is in Harold and Kay Whipple's blood. The Warren County couple have been traveling the state for years putting on educational programs for children. Last spring, Harold announced they wanted to put together a program about prairies.

But with the help of the Warren Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Iowa Learning Farm, and a grant from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's District Initiative

Fund, a much larger program developed targeting fourth graders that shows how prairies, wetlands, and croplands work together.

NRCS District Conservationist Nick Morrell (Indiana) says the program teaches kids the importance of healthy soil and clean water. "It includes fun activities, including an original card game that illustrates biodiversity within and between different ecosystems," he said.

Morrell says the program also includes an educational packet for teachers, which is composed of posters and a music video.

The Whipples and Iowa Learning Farm tested the program in Warren County schools prior to the end of the 2011-12 school year, visiting 11 classrooms. "The program will be presented at the CDI (Conservation Districts of Iowa) annual conference in September," said Morrell.

"The program is very informative, and students interacted and very attentive," said Morrell. "We've received good reviews from the classroom teachers. I hope other conservation districts will take this program and materials to their local schools."

## USDA Turns 150: Johnson County Celebrates

USDA turned 150 years-old on May 15, and while there was a large celebration in Washington D.C., local USDA offices were on their own.

The Johnson County USDA Service Center celebrated with a potluck on the 15th, and added up years of service for all staff members.

"It added up to 201 years of service between FSA, NRCS, IDALS, Pheasants Forever, and the District," said Kate Giannini, soil conservationist with NRCS.



## Job Shadowing: From Costa Rica to Iowa

The Indianola Field Office recently hosted Wartburg College student Mauricio Leon from San Jose, Costa Rica, as a volunteer.

Leon says he is interested in working in a field related to natural resource and environmental conservation or renewable energy. He is participating in Wartburg's Orange Connection program, which brings together students with alumni host families to experience more of Iowa, and with a host professional working in their field of interest.

Leon is no stranger to agriculture. His father is a systems analyst for a cattle feedlot, researching methane generation. While visiting the Indianola field office, Leon met with a livestock producer who installed a new waste storage facility. He also



*Mauricio Leon, a Wartburg College student from Costa Rica, stands in front of a livestock facility in Warren County.*

saw a seasonal high tunnel, a grade stabilization structure, a wetland easement, and he even assisted in a terrace survey.



*Carolyn Dirksen, state secretary in the Allison Field Office, stops to take a picture with students near her station along the prairie walk.*

## 28 Years of Success: Butler Prairie Flower Walk

Butler Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) hosted the 28th Annual Butler Center/Clay Prairie Flower Walk on May 14.

Carolyn Dirksen, state secretary in the Allison Field Office, says they hosted about 100 students from several schools.

Dirksen used the back of a pickup truck and card tables to show different textures and layers of soil. "Our main topic is taking care of soil and water," she said. "The students took pumpkin seeds to take home and plant.

"We focused on the theme 'Soil to Spoon' to teach how food comes from the soil, so we need to take care of it."



## Clear Your Cupboards: 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Food Drive

At the beginning of June Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the kickoff of the fourth annual Feds Feed Families Food Drive.

Each year of the food drive, USDA employees have stepped up to the plate: in 2011, USDA employees organized more than 2,000 food drives across the country and collected 1.79 million pounds of fresh and shelf-stable food.

Secretary Vilsack has challenged us to regain our number one spot

amongst federal departments and agencies by raising the most food out of any agency or department. Last Year, USDA raised the most pounds of food per employee.

So far, 450 field offices have registered their food drives. Form an office team today and get involved by registering



your field office food drive. For questions, each USDA agency has a designated food drive captain, or you can e-mail [callaborate@usda.gov](mailto:callaborate@usda.gov).

## Arbor Day Planting: New Trees for Students in Montgomery County



*On Arbor Day, April 27, Lindsey Barney, DNR district forester; Kirk Baird, commissioner; and Mark Palmquist, state technician, helped the Elliott elementary students plant their three trees.*

For the third year in a row, the Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) sponsored tree plantings at local elementary schools.

This year Elliott Elementary students started preparing for the tree planting back in March when the students set a goal to “grow a tree of books” in honor of Read Across America Day. The goal was met, so students were able to help Dr. Seuss’s *Lorax* by planting three trees of their own.

## Partner News

### IDALS-DSC

#### McDonald Named SE Iowa Field Rep

On June 4, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship-Division of Soil Conservation (IDALS-DSC) announced Matt McDonald as the new Field Representative for Southeast Iowa.

McDonald was serving as an Environmental Specialist in the Land Quality Bureau within the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). For the past eight years, he managed state permitting programs for land application of industrial waste byproducts.

McDonald grew up on a family farm near Princeton, Mo., where his family ran a cow/calf operation.

### Iowa DNR

#### Gipp Promoted to Director

Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad recently named Deputy Directory Chuck Gipp as director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), replacing Roger Lande, who retired.

Gipp, the former director for the Iowa Dept. of Ag and Land Stewardship (IDALS), told *The Des Moines Register* that he plans to serve until Brandstad leaves offices.

"We do not expect wholesale changes," Gipp told the *Register*. "We are a regulatory agency and have responsibility to preserve and protect our natural resources at to provide outdoor recreation."

### Iowa DNR

#### Trautman Named Deputy Director



Retired USDA-NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (Fairfield) Bruce Trautman

was named Deputy Director of the Iowa DNR in June.

The move came after Roger Lande retired from his position as Iowa DNR Director, and Chuck Gipp was promoted from deputy director to director.

## Leopold Center: Seeking Research Ideas for 2013

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture is looking for innovative ideas that will help fulfill its mission to identify and reduce negative environmental and socio-economic impacts of agricultural practices and contribute to the development of profitable farming systems that conserve natural resources.

Specifics are outlined in the Leopold Center's 2012 Request for Pre-proposals (RFP) that is part of its longrunning competitive grants program. The deadline for submitting ideas, in the form of a 2-3 page concept paper, is Aug. 10, 2012. Projects selected in the process are eligible for funding beginning in 2013.

The Center will accept pre-proposals from investigators representing any Iowa nonprofit organization/agency and/or educational institution, including soil and water conservation districts, schools and colleges and regional development groups. Farmers, landowners and farm-based businesses are encouraged to participate in the preproposal process.

The RFP can be downloaded from the Center's web site at [www.leopold.iastate.edu/grants/rfp](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/grants/rfp). Hard copies can be obtained from the Center office by calling (515) 294-3711 or emailing [leocenter@iastate.edu](mailto:leocenter@iastate.edu). Inquiries should be directed to the appropriate initiative coordinator.



## Changes In: NRCS Personnel

### *In order of Effective Date*

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Collins, Lane	Asst. State Conservationist-FO	Promotion	5/6/12	Fairfield
Kolbe, Larrette	District Conservationist	Reassignment	5/20/12	Storm Lake
Yule, Katie	Soil Conservationist	Converted to Career Cond. Appt.	5/20/12	Charles City
Schaefer, Michelle	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	5/20/12	Decorah
Porter, Lance	Soil Conservationist	Converted to Career Cond. Appt.	5/20/12	Epworth
Boyland, Erika	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	5/20/12	Winterset
Shea, John	Soil Conservation Technician	Resignation	6/1/12	Estherville
Wilson, Robyn	Soil Conservationist	Converted to Career Cond. Appt.	6/3/12	Carroll
Hawks, Joshua	Soil Conservation Technician	Career Cond. Appt.	6/3/12	Carroll
McCall, Kevin	Asst. State Conservationist-FO	Promotion	6/3/12	Fort Dodge
Henson, Tara	Soil Conservation Technician	Converted to Career Cond. Appt.	6/3/12	Nevada
Gibson, Douglas	Soil Conservation Technician	Converted to Career Cond. Appt.	6/3/12	Newton
Welsh, Matthew	Soil Conservation Technician	Converted to Career Cond. Appt.	6/17/12	Orange City
Tesdell, Jonathan	Soil Conservation Technician	Career Cond. Appt.	6/17/12	Guthrie Center
Goemaat, Justin	Soil Conservation Technician	Reassignment	6/17/12	Hampton
Mathis, Greg	Resource Conservationist	Reassignment	6/17/12	Council Bluffs
DuVal, Dale	District Conservationist	Promotion/ Reassignment	6/17/12	Logan
Williams, Nicholas	Soil Conservationist	Converted to Career Cond. Appt.	6/17/12	Donnellson
Giombi, Holly	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	6/17/12	Malcom

## Changes In: DSC Personnel

### *In order of Effective Date*

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Sarah Asberry	Program Planner	Resigned	5/17/12	Des Moines